

Mr. Chairman, in a moment I am going to ask to withdraw the amendment, but I want to engage Chairman DICKS in a brief colloquy. But first let me provide a little bit of background here.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the amendment deals with claims under an 1866 law known as R.S. 2477 that granted rights-of-way to build highways over Federal lands. This act was repealed in 1976, but because Congress did not set a deadline for people claiming these rights-of-way to come forward, we still do not know what valid rights-of-way may exist.

There are pending claims that affect military lands and lands once owned by the Federal Government that are now private property. Other claims involve national parks, national forests and other conservation areas.

When the Clinton administration tried to resolve this problem administratively, Congress blocked that by passing a law barring issuance of final regulations on this subject until Congress authorized them. That law is still on the books. The Bush administration has not asked Congress to change the law. Instead, they want to do an end run around Congress and to deal with these claims through an administrative process.

My amendment would have blocked them from doing that because I think we should deal with that problem through new legislation. Toward that end, I have worked for a number of years with counties in my State and introduced a bill based on the results of that work.

My goal has been and still remains to establish a fair and neutral process that will result in setting a time certain for claims to be brought forward so valid claims can be recognized and any invalid ones will be resolved and so to bring an end to litigation and controversy. I do plan to continue to work on that approach in this Congress.

If I might, at this time, I would turn to the chairman and ask him, does the chairman agree with me that it would be better for the administration to work with Congress to resolve this issue, rather than trying to follow a course that will lead straight to more litigation?

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman will yield, yes, I agree. In our report on this bill, the Appropriations Committee warns the Interior Department that we are concerned about the Department's interpretation and actions that would disclaim Federal interests in lands subject to an R.S. 2477 claim or issue any nonbinding determination that would have a similar effect. That is why we tell them to provide advanced notice to the Congress if the Interior Department plans to approve any R.S. 2477 claims. We also require them to provide quarterly reports on activities concerning claims under the R.S. 2477 statute. But it would be even better for the administration to work with the gentleman and the Nat-

ural Resources Committee to develop a legislative solution for this serious problem, and I urge them to do so.

Mr. Chairman, I commend the gentleman for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, I want to thank Chairman DICKS for his thoughts.

Mr. Chairman, I am not going to impose on the time of the House by calling for a vote on the amendment today, although the problem has not gone away and it will not go away unless Congress acts.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be withdrawn.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the amendment is withdrawn.

There was no objection.

AMENDMENT NO. 12 OFFERED BY MR. DEFAZIO

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 12 offered by Mr. DEFAZIO:
At the end of the bill (before the short title), add the following new title:

TITLE VI—ADDITIONAL GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 601. In implementing the amendments made by section 5401(c) of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (Public Law 110-28), a resource advisory committee established under section 205 of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 500 note; Public Law 106-393), in addition to the duties assigned to the committee by subsection (b) of such section, shall—

(1) monitor projects submitted by that committee that have been approved by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture;

(2) advise the designated Federal official on the progress of monitoring efforts under paragraph (1); and

(3) make recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture regarding any changes or adjustments to the projects being monitored by the committee.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I reserve a point of order on the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman reserves a point of order.

Pursuant to the order of the House of Tuesday, June 26, 2007, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I realize that the other side is reserving a point of order on this because of a previous objection to an amendment which would have allocated \$425 million into the Safe and Secure Rural Schools program, a program which I very much support. I am on the authorizing committee and I can assure them that the authorizing committee is determined to move forward on, one of the authorizing committees at least, in the near future. In the last Congress, the Resources Committee did act and the Agriculture Committee did not on reauthorizing this program.

So we are engaging in that process in good faith and hope to be working with our friends on the Appropriations Committee in the not-too-distant future to extend this program for a number of years as we phase it down.

But in the interim, the Appropriations Committee and this Congress did, in the emergency supplemental, approve 1 year of temporary funding, which was excellent. It staved off disasters in county after county in terms of closed jails, loss of rural sheriffs patrols and many, many other vital services.

But, unfortunately, in doing that there was an oversight, and it is a simple oversight, easily rectified if there is not an objection. One of the most beneficial parts for the Federal taxpayers generally beyond the services that are provided within the counties and school districts across America is the Resource Advisory Committees, committees made up of a broad cross-section of communities across the Western United States, both environmental, timber interests, general community members, who have come forward, worked collaboratively, and have put 15 percent of the funds under the program, reinvested it back into the Federal lands, providing tremendous benefits ecologically to those lands, economically, in terms of thinning projects and other things, things that were not within the budget of the United States Forest Service or the Department of the Interior in the case of the O&C lands.

Unfortunately, since these committees, which are widely applauded in a bipartisan way across the Western United States, were not reauthorized, this language simply would give them authorization to monitor the ongoing activities.

It is extraordinarily noncontroversial, and it would be extraordinarily regrettable if in some sort of a misplaced tit for tat there was an objection to this bipartisan amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN).

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank my colleague Mr. DEFAZIO for his work on this amendment with me.

I would like to point out that on page 182 of the committee report there is listed 30 different laws that have not been reauthorized and are being funded. Some of these laws were last reauthorized 28 years ago. So the fact that we have something before you that has just gone out of operation here in less than a year, and we are trying to do a technical correction here to reauthorize it, I don't think is deserving of a point of order.